

## A SINGULAR CUSTOM

And How It Was Illustrated  
by a Russian Countess

By LOUISE B. CUMMINGS

A ball was in progress in the Winter palace at St. Petersburg. There were few persons in the resplendent throng who were not titled, and in Russia even a prince cannot hold his position in the court circle without complying with a number of requirements. Among the few at the ball without the prefix to the name of count, baron, duke or even general, without gold lace or a string of decorations on the breast, but in plain black evening dress, was Adelbert Wyman, an attaché to the American legation.

If Wyman was bereft of artificial plumage nature had endowed him with an attractive personality. He was finely built, being tall and proportioned for an athlete, while his countenance bespoke a manly spirit within. Having inherited a fortune and work not being a necessity with him, he had adopted a profession in which money making had no part and which to him seemed full of interest—diplomacy.

Wyman had prepared himself for his career by the study of international law and more especially of several foreign languages, Russian among the number. He was therefore enabled to chat in her native tongue with a young Russian girl, with whom he danced several times at this imperial ball. The Countess Olga Ivanovna was one of those women of the north whose complexions are fair, whose eyes are blue and whose hair is flaxen. Notwithstanding the fact that she was noble and her companion was a commoner, she seemed to be pleased with him. Indeed, there was something unique in that unadorned figure among hundreds of men most of whom relied for admiration on their velvet clothes, tinsel and the medals strung on their breasts. Some of them were misshapen, some had homely faces, and all were dressed as if for a play. Wyman alone was unadorned.

"How do you like Russia?" asked the countess. All visitors are asked this question and if they are well bred usually reply that they like the country they visit very much. Wyman's reply was that the country interested him. When asked why, he said that it was in the marked difference to what he had been accustomed.

"In what way?" asked the girl. "First, with you Russians everything points from the people to the government, while with us everything points from the government to the people. In other words, here the people seem to be for the government, while with us our government is for the people. But it is the many singular customs in the different parts of your great empire that especially interest me, the pronounced varied types of your people. I have read that in a certain province dowryless girls are raffled for as wives, the money paid in for chances being given for a marriage portion."

"There is a more singular custom than that," added the countess. "In a certain part of Russia the girls propose to the men. If a girl wants to marry a man she goes to his house. If he refuses to marry her he is regarded as insulting her and her family, and they take revenge upon him."

"The privilege of proposing marriage," said Wyman, "accorded to the man is a mere custom. For my part I see no reason why a woman should not be as free to ask a man to marry her as that a man is free to ask her to be his wife."

"Do you really mean that?" asked the countess, looking up at Wyman archly. "I certainly do. But you must not take me in that respect as representing my countrymen. I like to think for myself and am not a slave to customs."

The two parted at this point, but just before the ball closed they met again. "We go next week to our home in the province of Viatka," she said. "If you will make us a visit there I think I can show you some more of our odd customs. The people about us have some very singular ones."

"I assure you I feel highly honored by the invitation and shall accept it with much pleasure."

In time Wyman received a formal invitation to visit Count Ivan Ivanovna's estates in Viatka. A time was set for his coming, but none for his departure. This surprised him, for it is usual among most entertainers in high life all over the world to invite their guests for a definite period. The American was cordially received by the young lady's family and a suit of rooms placed at his disposal. He had not before met any of them except Olga, and he seemed to be considered her special guest. At any rate, she took upon herself his entertainment, driving him about herself, showing him the people, how they lived, how they worked and how they reared their children. Wyman was much interested in it all and more especially in the ignorance of not only the children, but of their parents.

"But you have not shown me," said Wyman one day when they were out together, "any of those singular customs you spoke of when in St. Petersburg."

"You must be patient," was the reply. "You Americans are always in

naste. If you are to be a diplomat you must get rid of that American trait."

A couple of weeks passed. Olga Ivanovna showed no disposition to part with her visitor, nor did he care especially to return to the city. There were no intricate questions between the United States and Russia to render his attendance on his chief necessary, and he was not recalled. He occupied his time during the day in studying the Russian people under the guidance of his fair hostess, and the evenings did not seem long enough, since he invariably spent them in her company.

If Wyman thought of what might come of this association it certainly did not occur to him that a family whose nobility might be traced back for centuries, which was in high favor with the czar, would consent to admit a commoner like himself into its charmed circle by giving him one of its members to wife. Nor did he suspect that Olga Ivanovna would stoop to ally herself with him. He was happy, and he was young, and young persons are not given to looking to a point where their happiness may come to an end.

One evening Olga showed a well defined symptom that the little god had claimed her as one of its victims. He parting with the American was accompanied by an intensity of feeling not before definitely displayed. Wyman went to his rooms wondering. Could it be that, yielding to love, this high-born beauty would surrender to an untitled man from the other side of the globe?

The next morning Olga told her guest that there was to be a singular ceremony in the line of what she had promised him. He was delighted. Olga would take part in it. Would he like to do the same? Certainly. What was it like? There would be racing. She would be dressed in running costume. If he intended to take part he would better dress for the same purpose. Capital! He had been a sprinter in school and afterward in college. He had several cups at home he had won on the cinder path.

An hour later Olga appeared attired in a dress the skirt of which came only to the knees. Wyman had no sprinting costume with him, so he appeared simply in a pair of white flannel trousers and shirt. Thus arrayed, the two sprang into a phaeton which stood at the door, and Olga drove to a field on which was a crowd of people. At one end of the open space was a tent. Olga drove to a point near the canvas, and both she and her guest alighted. Olga went into the tent for a few moments, where she divested herself of her jacket and came out ready for a run.

Wyman saw no one else prepared for racing and noticed that he and Olga seemed to be the center of attraction. While he was wondering what it all meant, Olga, who had walked a short distance from him, turned, beckoned to him and then darted away over the field.

Wyman ran after her. There was the same excitement, the same cheers, the same shouts, as when he had won cups in America. He was surprised to see that Olga was running very swiftly. Gallantry at first caused him to moderate his pace, but it was not long before he realized that if he was to catch her he must do his best.

The space to be traveled was 200 yards, and to win Wyman must catch the fugitive before reaching a goal at the other end of the field. He was at first so dilatory that when Olga had made half the distance it seemed he would lose. And so he would have lost had not Olga in the next quarter slowed her pace. Within a hundred yards of the goal she ran so slowly that Wyman had no difficulty in catching her. He put his hand on her shoulder, and she fell back into his arms amid a vociferous approval of the onlookers.

Having recovered her breath, she slipped her arm through his, and they walked back together to the starting point. Out of the tent came a priest and advanced toward them. Olga raised her hand in protest.

"No, no, father. This is not a real wedding. This gentleman wished to see some of our customs, and I thought I had best show him one of our wedding ceremonies and arrange that he should be a part of it, but your services will not be required."

Wyman stood looking at the speaker wondering. The excitement of the chase was upon him. Moreover, a delightful suspicion flashed in his mind that there was something more in this ceremony than to show him a custom of the country.

As for the crowd, it showed signs of dissent. There were cries of "A wedding, a wedding!" But the countess, who was much beloved by the people, stilled them.

"For my part," said Wyman, looking at Olga with eyes that expressed far more than his words implied, "I think the people are right. We should not disappoint them."

At this the cries were renewed, and this time Olga found it impossible to still them. She gave Wyman a questioning look, then dropped her eyes. Wyman struck while the iron was hot and signaled to the priest to advance and perform the ceremony. Olga yielded, and the two, having been made one, were escorted to the bride's home by a singing, shouting populace.

Wyman returned to the embassy at St. Petersburg, and it was announced to the world that the secretary of the American legation and the Countess Olga Ivanovna were betrothed. Not long afterward they were married in presence of the imperial family, and there were few persons at the capital who knew that this was a supplementary ceremony.

Wyman's life has been spent mostly abroad, but a portion of it he has lived in America with his Russian wife.

## LOCAL NEWS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE.

Mr. and Mrs. Iliff Bryant and child of Texas are visiting his parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Bryant, and other relatives.

Andrew J. Crawford who moved to North Troy last spring, is excavating for a cellar on his building lot in that village.

Mrs. Houston went to Troy on Wednesday, July 29. She expected to return to St. Johnsbury the following Friday.

Mrs. Belle Gilbeau of the West Hill was married recently to Benj. Pashby of Lowell. Mr. and Mrs. Pashby will reside in Lowell.

The Houston-Woodworth auction took place at the M. E. church where the goods were stored, on Tuesday, July 28. Coffran of Derby was the auctioneer.

A party of young people, twelve in number, ascended Jay Peak on Friday, July 31. W. O. Wright carried the party. Instead of using his new Studebaker, he took a two horse power hay rack.

The severest thunderstorm of the season, and in fact the most destructive for several years, took place on Sunday, Aug. 2. Charles O'Strout's barn was struck by lightning and burned. Pete Ducharme's barn was struck and burned. He had nearly finished haying. Arthur Benware's house was struck and one of the boys was stunned for a time. J. G. Watkins's house was struck and the window curtains singed and the tablespread and telephone book burned. These places were on the West Hill. O. W. Bailey whose pasture runs back to the westward, had seven cows and a bull killed. In the valley there was a general demoralization of telephones and telephone lines. Several telephone poles were splintered in the vicinity of the Geo. Miller farm. On the West Hill also a mare belonging to Frank Martin was killed. The young colt running with her was not injured.

## LOWELL

C. C. Barre of Worcester, Mass., is visiting his son, Clement Barre.

J. L. Silsby and M. R. Alexander were in West Burke over Sunday. Mr. Alexander was called there to attend the funeral of an aunt.

Mrs. Lucy Start and son of Bakersfield are visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. F. Stephenson.

Miss Mamie Snyder spent last week with relatives at Orleans.

Fred Bridges, Howard Pope and Sanford Stephenson were home from Bakersfield over Sunday.

## WESTMORE

The Ladies' Aid society will hold their annual apron sale Wednesday afternoon and evening, Aug. 12. All who wish to contribute to a good work will please send the articles to Mrs. C. H. Atkins or the postoffice before Tuesday. Ice cream will be served during the sale. There will also be a food table. Anything saleable will be appreciated. A short program will be given in the evening. Everyone is most cordially invited.

## Restless Flat Dwellers.

The restlessness of the flat dweller is a national mystery. Why does he go forth inevitably in the spring to find another flat and to insert his family and furniture therein? As likely as not it is the flat which he abandoned five years before. Since then he has occupied four other flats, each a vast improvement over its predecessor, and he is now delighted with the new flat which he left in disgust five years before. He has spent hundreds of dollars in arriving at this stage of happiness, but he will abandon the flat again next year and fit on in a moving van as large as a small chapel.

We falter, appalled at the task of discovering the flat dweller's purpose until we consider the strangely similar restlessness of the sick man who lies on one side until he can't stand it any longer and then, with the assistance of his devoted family, is turned over on the other side. The change is a delightful relief, although a few hours before he couldn't endure to lie on that side a minute longer.—George Fitch in Collier's Weekly.

## Very Devout.

"Do you have any trouble in getting your husband to go to church?"

"Not a bit."

"How nice it must be to have a husband like that. Does Mr. Smithers take an active part in the church work?"

"Yes. He is the organist and gets a very nice salary."—Chicago Record-Herald.

## PUBLIC SERVICE.

It is the duty of those serving the people in public place to closely limit public expenditures to the actual needs of the government economically administered, because this bounds the right of the government to exact tribute from the earnings of labor or the property of the citizen, and because public extravagance begets extravagance among the people. We should never be ashamed of the simplicity and prudent economies which are best suited to the operation of a republican form of government and most compatible with the mission of the American people. Those who are selected for a limited time to manage public affairs are still of the people and may do much by their example to encourage, consistently with the dignity of their official functions, that plain way of life which among their fellow citizens aids integrity and promotes thrift and prosperity.—Grover Cleveland.

## Martha Dana Shepard Dead.

As mentioned last week the death of Mrs. Shepard will be of interest to many Orleans county people and the Monitor therefore prints an extended account of her life as contained in a Boston paper.

Mrs. Martha Shepard, long prominently active in musical life in Boston and the northern New England states, died this morning at her residence at 10 Alpha road, near Waldece street, Dorchester. She has been in failing health for some years, yet Mrs. Shepard continued her musical activities and interests up to about a year ago, since which she had been forced to relinquish them. Her place had been an unusual one in musical work.

"Mrs. Shepard was born in 1842 in New Hampton, N. H., and reached her seventy-second birthday anniversary on July 2. She was the daughter of Dr. John A. Dana and Sarah Jane (Head) Dana. Her early education was gained in public schools and at the New Hampshire institution, and her first musical training began under her mother. The family moved to Ashland, N. H., where her father practiced his profession. His daughter came to Boston to continue her advanced musical studies under various teachers, including Leonard Marshall, E. J. Lang and H. F. Leavens. She early made a notable place for herself as a pianist and accompanist of remarkable ability and she also was a singer.

"Her work took Mrs. Shepard to musical centres in Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, as well as northern New York, Pennsylvania and elsewhere. She was associated in this work with Carl Zerah, who conducted musical festivals and oratorio performances in these states. Mrs. Shepard not only was the accompanist at the piano, but at rehearsals, while playing she frequently would break forth into song, her voice leading the chorus singers in their work and greatly helping them to learn their allotted parts. As a solo pianist she was also a woman of notable ability.

"In later years Mrs. Shepard's work had been that of director of the Dorchester Woman's choral class. She was a member of the club and she achieved great results with the chorus under her charge. She also directed the Melrose choral club and at one time a choral club in Maine. She was a member of the Boston Musical Society, director of the Third Religious society, the Unitarian church at Dorchester Lower Mills. Apart from these and other musical interests, Mrs. Shepard was a member of New Hampshire's Daughters in Boston.

"It is recalled that one of the oldtime music books used by choral and singing societies contained a compliment to Mrs. Shepard, as four hymns, two each on the long narrow pages in which form books were then published, were so arranged opposite each other that the names of the hymns read as follows: "Martha," "Dana," "Shepard," and "Ashland," her home town. "Following her marriage, Mrs. Shepard lived for some years at Harrison Square, Dorchester. Her husband, Allen B. Shepard, who was connected with the Armstrong Transfer company, died in 1900, and her younger son, John Dana Shepard, who had been a valued singing member of the cadets and other amateur organizations died the same year."

## DEEDS, NOT WORDS.

Do not dispute from now on about the qualities that make a good man, but be thou really and truly a good man.—Marcus Aurelius.



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